

I oppose Senate Bill 94 as proposed.

Comments:

1. My first concern is in regards to the specific wording "people who gather to exchange".

The term is not self explanatory and needs further definition. Is this a group of friends or private club who gather in a location to exchange foods amongst themselves? In that application the food is traceable to the source and there is a level of insight and personal trust in regards to each other's food safety practices amongst participants. This would not be an event that requires licensure.

If the term includes people gathering with the intention to distribute home processed foods to consumers at a public event, then licensure must continue to be mandatory. There is a level of expectation by consumers when they go to public events that the food is guaranteed to be safe. People assume that foods (unless otherwise labeled) sold at retail at public events have been approved by a health authority. If food comes from an unlicensed kitchen made with unapproved processes, we cannot offer any assurance that the food is safe. At a minimum if this bill is to be considered, any canned foods allowed to be sold at retail that have not gone through process review should be labeled as processed in a home kitchen and not having been approved by a health authority.

Point being: "people who gather to exchange" must be clearly defined.

2. My second concern is in regards to food safety and home canned foods:

You cannot tell by looking at a jar of food whether or not it is o.k. You have to know a food's history to make that determination. Thus, "how it was canned" becomes a very important factor in food safety.

Going through the licensing process gives insight into how a product is prepared as the process and recipe are reviewed for food safety. It is mandatory that there are two forms of protection against the growth of bacteria of concern (namely clostridium botulinum) when a person submits a recipe for review. For those that are not familiar with c. botulinum, it can produce a deadly toxin when allowed to grow in an aerobic environment such as canned food. It is found in soil alongside produce in gardens. It can produce spores which can survive in unfavorable conditions such as high heat or in the presence of chemicals making it very difficult to kill. A person exposed to c. botulinum can experience range of varying symptoms including nausea, vomiting, breathing difficulties, weakness or paralysis, and/or blurred vision to name a few. It can potentially be fatal.

Additionally in the plan review process, the person doing the canning is made aware of available resources and provides a basic demonstration of their knowledge of food safety. The facility in which the food is prepared is also approved. Labeling requirements ensure that ingredients are identified so that those with allergies can avoid dangerous foods and the food itself can be tracked or recalled if necessary.

Regulation of canned foods should not be revoked as proposed by SB94 because it provides a trained professional look into how a product is canned. This provides the consumers at public

events with some ease knowing that there has been some oversight as to how the products they are purchasing have been prepared. No regulation may allow food that may have been canned improperly to be made available to the unsuspecting consumer. It is possible that an inappropriate process is used to can the food and the consumer has no way of knowing that the food is unsafe until it is too late.